Karl Marx 8 Essay, Research Paper

Karl Marx

Are you a communist? No, a citizen of the United States of America can t be a communist. But Karl Marx was a communist, or at least he founded some of the main principles of communism, and Karl Marx firmly believed in some of the things that make this country what it is, like equality. But, Karl Marx was still a great political philosopher of his time, and a humanitarian. To really understand the principles of Marx s teachings one would have to study him, or at least read an essay that describes Marx s life. There are three key elements to understanding Marx they are his childhood and education, the people that had the greatest influence on him, and his writings.

At 2:00 A.M. of May 5, 1818, the life of the greatest political philosopher began. He was born in the Rhine province of Prussia, and was born to Henriette and Hirschel Marx (Payne 17). Hirschel Marx was a rich lawyer, and he was also a Jew (World Book Encyclopedia 236M). On August 26, 1824 Karl and his whole family were baptized, so his family turned away from its traditional Jewish teachings to Protestant Christianity (Payne 21). At the age of twelve Karl entered the Friedrich Wilhiem Gymnasium. He stayed there for five years excelling in foreign languages, but not really caring about mathematics and history (Payne 23).

Karl s father decided that Karl would attend the University of Bonn to study law (World Book Encyclopedia 236M). Karl became an active member of poetry clubs, while studying at the University. The poetry clubs of Marx s time was more of a revolutionary club than anything. The club members would sit around and practice the art of revolution (Payne 43). Marx only stayed at the University of Bonn for two semesters. Karl then went on to attend the University of Berlin where he grew more distant from his father (Payne 52). Marx s father died on May 10, 1838 at the age of fifty-six. Marx didn t attend his father s funeral, because the trip was too far, and he was to busy (Payne 55). Marx spent a total of five years at the University of Berlin.

People can be the greatest influence on a person s life. One of the greatest influence on a person is the spouse. Jenny von Westphalen was born on February 12, 1814 (Peters 1). Karl Marx s older sister Sophie introduced Karl to Jenny (Peters 14). Jenny was the center of society at Trier, and had many suitors to choose from, but she had fallen in love with Marx (Peters 19). The romance continued even after Marx was at the University of Berlin, and while there he sent her love letters, and poems (Payne 47). The wedding of Karl Marx and Jenny von Westphalen took place on June 19, 1843 (Peters 41). Another great influence on Marx was Jenny s father the Baron von Westphalen. Baron von Westphalen found in Karl a formidable intelligence, and a fierce determination to know and understand everything (Payne 28). The two would spend whole mornings trampling over hills and through the woods discussing philosophy, science, and the art of government. It was from Baron von Westphalen that Karl Marx first learned about socialism. These long talks with the Baron were an essential part of Marx s education, perhaps the most essential part (Payne 28). One of the people that people usually don t associate with Karl Marx is a man by the name G.W.F. Hegel. Hegel was a German philosopher that argued in order to understand any aspect of human culture, we must retrace and understand its history (World Book Encyclopedia 165H). Hegel was a professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin from 1818 until his death, which means that Karl Marx must have taken a class with Hegel. Hegel must have inspired Marx, and if Marx hadn t taken his class some of Marx s best-known work would not have been written, because the majority of his work is written on and account of the past.

Marx had a variety of works ranging from philosophical essays to a book that took Marx thirty-year to write. Karl Marx wrote many essays between the years of 1842 and 1847. These essays range from fifteen pages long to a seven hundred-page book (World Book Encyclopedia 237M). Eagleton states that the basic themes of these philosophical essays include Marx s bitter view that the economy is oppressing human beings and his belief that political action revolution, is a necessary part of philosophy (4). The Communist Manifesto was a pamphlet written jointly with Engels on the eve of the German revolution. The Communist Manifesto considers history to be a series of conflicts between classes. I t predicts that the ruling middle class will be overthrown by the working class, and the product will be a working classless society (World Book Encyclopedia 237M). Das Kapital was Karl Marx s major work. He spent about thirty years writing it (World Book Encyclopedia 237M). Marx called it Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie, or A contribution to the critique of political economy (Marx 11). In Das Kapital, Marx described the free enterprise system as he saw it. He also claims to have seen the many flaws of the system that would destroy it through periods of inflation and depression (World Book Encyclopedia 237M). The most serious flaw is that the free enterprise system accumulates more and more wealth, but becomes less and less capable of using this wisely (Eagleton 41). Through all of his works three key ideas prevail. Production and society is the first idea. The process of production according to Marx is a collective effort, not

an individual one (385). The second idea is that there is a class struggle. According to Marx all of history there has been a struggle between the ruling and

the working classes. Marx believed that private ownership was at the heart of the class system. For people to be truly free, the means of production must be publicly owned (World Book Encyclopedia 237M). His final idea was that to achieve all of his philosophies there must be a revolution (Payne 158).

To explain Karl Marx one must analyze his education and childhood, the influences on him, and his writings. Karl Marx had a way of writing ideas that were way ahead of his time. Look at what used to be the Soviet Union that country was based upon Marx s theories, and they still failed. Marx was not an evil man, but he was a communist. The only reason that being a communist is bad is because of the negative effects of the present day communistic powers. Marx started off okay, with the idea that all people should be equal, but then he turned into a radical towards the end. So maybe you don t believe in the idea of communism but what about Marxism. Do you believe in the idea that everyone is equal? Are you a Marxist?

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